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ABSTRACT

This paper provides a brief history and background on Nigeria and its educational system; school libraries in Nigeria; and increased recognition by the government of the importance of libraries in education and resultant legislation. The majority of teacher-librarians in the Nigerian school system do not have professional qualifications in librarianship, and received their librarianship training through short in-service courses and workshops. Some universities and colleges have begun to introduce programs to train teacher-librarians for Nigerian school systems. The Nigerian School Library Association is working towards the professionalization of the teacher-librarian position in schools to help increase remuneration, improve career prospects, and help school librarians keep to their designated job instead of acting as replacements for subject teachers. The paper proposes a curriculum for the training of school librarians in the Nigerian school system, including proposed minimum librarianship qualifications for primary and secondary school librarians, and proposed courses for study. The librarianship training program would include courses in management and a teaching subject, for the school librarian to have equal academic status with other teachers and to assist them in collection development and reference services to users. (Contains 10 references.) (SWC)

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Training School Librarians for the Nigerian School System: A New Perspective

by
David F. Elaturoti

Introduction

It gives me pleasure to share thoughts on new perspectives in developing training programs for school librarians in the Nigerian school system at this international conference of school librarians. As some of us are now aware, the 24th Annual Conference of IASL will be held at Abuja, Nigeria in 1995. I will therefore like to use this forum to give some background information on Nigeria for the benefit of those who may not be conversant with the details of the country.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria is the largest single African country occupying an area of 923,768 square kilometers (356,669 square miles) and having a population of 88.5 million. Nigeria lies between latitudes 4° and 14° north of the equator and longitudes 3° and 14° east of the Greenwich Meridian. Thus, it is entirely within the tropical zone. It's climate varies from the tropical at the coast to sub-tropical further inland. There are two well-marked seasons, the rainy season lasting from April to October and the dry season from November to March. Maximum temperature in the coastal areas of the south is 37° celcius while the absolute minimum temperature is 10° celcius. The climate is drier further north with maximum temperature of 45° celcius. The Federal Republic of Nigeria consists of thirty states. The seat of the Federal Government is at Abuja. The educational system was predominantly British oriented and the official language both of instruction and government business is English. The provision of primary and secondary education is a shared responsibility between the states and the federal government. The country adopts the 6-3-3-4 education system which provides for six years of primary education, three years of junior and three years of senior secondary and four years in the university. Education is now compulsory for the child to the junior secondary school level. Tuition is free in all primary schools, most post-primary and tertiary institutions. The move in the education sector is to make education free at all levels.

Education recorded a phenomenal growth in Nigeria in the 1970s not only in terms of increase in the number of institutions and student enrollment but also with reference to its geographical spread into all parts of the Federation. The available statistics on education shows that there are 34,904 primary schools with an enrollment of 12,721,087 pupils, 5,868 secondary schools with students' population of 2,723,791, and 81 special education institutions with 10,000 disabled children. There are also 249 Grade II Teachers' Colleges with 220,472 students, 241 Technical/Vocational centers with 117,852 students, 21 polytechnics with 60,533 students, 48 Colleges of Education training teachers for the National Certificate of Education having a total of 58,335 students and 32 Universities with over 160,767 students.

The emphasis on education has shifted from the liberal arts to science and technology. The objective of the change in emphasis is to enable the nation to meet its manpower requirements in various areas of social, economic, and political growth as well as development and modernization to which it aspires. This was one of the fundamental facts that informed the adoption of the 6-3-3-4 system in the National Education policy which emphasis is on guiding students to enable them to choose the career for which each individual is best suited early in life, based on the students' demonstrated aptitude and potential after the first nine years of continuous education assessment.

School Libraries in Nigeria

The various education laws in Nigeria are silent about the provision of school libraries. This prompted the Nigerian School Library Association to prepare the Guidelines for Nigerian Legislation for School Libraries/Media Resource Centers in 1978, copies of which were submitted to the Federal and State Ministries of Education. The importance of the provision of school library media centers in Nigerian schools for the effective implementation of the education program of the school has been stressed many times by Nigerian educators. The National Policy on Education which came into force in the 1980s recognized the important role of the

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school library media center in the education program of the school and recommended that all primary and secondary schools, as well as teachers' colleges, be planned with library media resource centers funded jointly by both Federal and State Governments.

Like many other countries, Nigeria experienced a period of economic growth and relative prosperity during the mid to late 1970s, the "oil boom" years, but this period was followed by the hard times of the 1980s with the attendant cutbacks in staff and funding slowing down school library development. But the boom of the 1970s resulted in only modest gains for school libraries. there are probably several reasons for this. First, available funds went into a rapid expansion of education at all levels, most dramatically the introduction of Universal Primary Education (UPE) in 1976. Funds that could have been used to develop school library services were expended on crash programs to provide classrooms and teachers for the increasing primary school population. A second reason is perhaps that there was insufficient demand for school libraries either because of lack of library awareness or because the educational system being practiced, the "chalk and talk" system, rendered them superfluous.

Recognition and Legislation

There has been increased recognition of the importance of libraries in education on the part of government. The National Policy on Education (1981) makes reference to school libraries as one of the most important educational service and acknowledges the need to supply materials and train staff for school libraries. Government has participated in studies and organized workshops to further the development of school library services, most recently in primary schools. Currently the World Bank Assisted Primary Education Project includes the development of libraries in primary schools. Workshops are being organized to train teacher-librarians for primary school libraries. The Local Governments are being directed to build zonal school libraries, at least one in each Local Government to provide library services to schools. The books and other learning resources for the primary school libraries are being evaluated, selected, and purchased by the Federal Ministry of Education under the World Bank Assisted Primary Education Project. At the secondary schools' level, both the federal and state governments are giving support to school library development.

Recognition of school libraries has also been achieved through the programs of the Nigerian School Library Association which include organizing workshops, conferences, and publishing professional literature. The Association has succeeded in providing a national forum and stimulating interest in organizing school libraries in various states. Attempts have been made to develop standards appropriate for Nigerian schools. Notable efforts by library professionals to publish standards for school libraries include Obi's *Manual for School Libraries on Small Budgets* (O.U.P. 1977), Ogunsheye's *Manual for Nigerian School Libraries* (Abadina Media Resource Centre 1978), and Elaturoti's *Developing a School Library Media Centre* (Onibonoje 1990). The Federal Ministry of Education (1992) published *Minimum Standards for School Libraries in Nigeria*.

Teacher-Librarians in Nigerian School System

In the Nigerian school system, teacher-librarians are qualified teachers who possess in addition to their teaching qualification any of the following: a degree, diploma, or certificate in librarianship or credits in librarianship courses. They are basically teachers who in addition to their teaching load, run a school library without additional remuneration to their salary. In recognition of the additional workload of organizing and running the school library program, they carry less teaching load than other teachers where feasible. The teacher-librarians are involved in teaching other subjects in the school curriculum. In schools where there are shortages of teachers, the teacher-librarians carry a full load of teaching leaving no time for the library work. The majority of the teacher-librarians do not have professional qualifications in librarianship.

Elaturoti (1982) reported that there was only one qualified teacher-librarian with ALA and a teaching qualification in the 293 secondary schools surveyed in the former Western State of Nigeria. Fourteen other teacher-librarians had librarianship knowledge through workshops. The remaining schools had no qualified teacher-librarians. Other studies by Bolodeoku (1979(and Opeke (1980) reported similar findings.

Training of Teacher-Librarians for Nigerian School System

Hitherto there has been no recognized training program for teacher-librarians by the government for the purpose of employment in public schools. The post of the teacher-librarian as earlier mentioned, has not attracted any additional remuneration. The bulk of the existing teacher-librarians in the school system have been trained through short inservice courses and workshops offered by the Abadina Media Resource Center, The States, School Library Association, Federal Ministry of Education, State Library Boards, and Teachers Resource Center, Jos. More recently, some universities and colleges of education have introduced programs to produce teacher-librarians for Nigerian school systems. Ajibero (1991) listed sic university library schools that offer specialization in school librarianship but remarked that not all the library schools have good programs for the training of teacher-librarians as the courses offered centered on the role of school libraries in the curricula and the need to encourage youth to use the library resources effectively. He concluded that far more concerted and well articulated programs need to be introduced in Nigerian library schools in order to produce teacher-librarians that would meet the challenges of the National Policy on Education.

Some colleges of education up till 1991 offered courses in librarianship as one of the three subjects studied for the Nigerian Certificate of Education (NCE), a three year post-secondary teachers certificate. Other subjects offered with librarianship are education and a teaching subject. The graduates of the program are to be employed in primary or secondary schools as teacher-librarians. This program is considered a right step toward providing adequate qualified school librarians for Nigerian schools. Contrary to expectations the program was phased out by the national council on Education in 1991 on the ground that librarianship is not a teaching subject in schools. Efforts being made to restore the program have not been successful. However a few librarianship courses have been integrated into the general studies program to equip the students with the knowledge of organization and use of library resources. The phasing out of librarianship as a subject for the NCE program has brought some set back to efforts to provide qualified teacher-librarians for the Nigerian school system.

There has been a problem of retention of qualified teacher-librarians in the job for a reasonable length of time in the schools for several reasons. The post is not a remunerative one as other duty posts in the school and therefore there is no incentive to keep them on the job. Second, for lack of subject teachers in schools particularly in the secondary schools, the teacher-librarians are usually assigned subjects to teach in the school without any reduction in their teaching load. Third, the teacher-librarians, when promoted to higher posts, find it difficult to combine library work with their new assignments. Frequent transfer of teachers has also deprived some schools of the services of dedicated and qualified teacher-librarians.

The lack of continuity in the service of the teacher-librarians in Nigeria school system has affected adversely the development of school libraries in Nigerian schools and the growth of the professional association of school librarians. The efforts made to get the government to recognize the position of teacher-librarian for appointment and remuneration has not yielded the desired results due to lack of qualified teacher-librarians in the school system.

The Nigerian School Library Association in realization of the obstacles to school library development in the Nigerian schools has resolved to work toward the professionalization of the position of teacher-librarian in schools. The achievement of this objective would facilitate the government recognition of the position for remuneration and improved career prospects and could help to keep the school librarians on their job in the schools. The Association has also proposed to substitute the designation "school librarians" for teacher-librarians for all qualified school librarians. It is also our expectation that the designation "school librarians" when adopted would make the school heads more conscious that the primary assignment of the school librarian is to develop and run an effective school media program in support of the education program of the school.

Proposed Curriculum for Training School Librarians for Nigerian School System

The proposed program by the Nigerian School Library Association for the training of school librarians takes into consideration the librarianship qualifications that are equivalent to the minimum teaching qualifications approved by the government for the primary and post-primary institutions in Nigeria.

The Diploma in Librarianship is being proposed as minimum qualification for school

librarians in primary schools. The Diploma is an equivalent of the Nigerian Certificate of Education, the minimum qualification prescribed for teachers in the nation's primary schools.

The Bachelor of Library Science is the minimum librarianship qualification proposed for the secondary schools. For teachers who want to train as school librarians after the Bachelor's degrees in a teaching subject, the Master of Library Science has been proposed for such teachers. The rationale for proposing these qualifications for school librarians is that they should have equal status with other teachers in the school to be able to relate to the teachers as members of faculty in the discharge of their duties as the media resource specialist in the school setting.

The courses for that program were designed in collaboration with the heads of the library schools in Nigerian universities. Three areas of competencies are identified for inclusion in the course program: Librarianship, education and teaching subject in the sciences, humanities or social sciences. The librarianship courses were selected from the existing courses offered in the library schools with some new additions. The education courses were selected from the existing courses in the departments of education in the Nigerian universities that are relevant to the needs of school librarians with or without education background. For the various programs the following courses are proposed:

Two-Year Diploma in Library Science for School Librarians

Librarianship Courses (Compulsory)
Libraries and society
Library resources
Cataloguing and classification
Library routines-Technical and readers services
Library work with children and young adults
School and education libraries
Compilation of bibliography
Library practice

Librarianship Courses (Required)
AV resources management
Subject information sources in science, social sciences and humanities
Library methods in education (Primary Schools)

Librarianship Coursed (Elective)
Long Essay. Submission of a paper based on observation during library practice

Education Courses (Compulsory)
Psychological foundations of education
Introduction to the history and policy on education
Psychology of learning
Educational psychology

Education Courses (Required)
Sociological and philosophical foundations of education
Principles and practice of education

Teaching Subject
The candidate will be offered one teaching subject in related departments in the university which would be studied for two years.

Bachelor of Library Science for School Librarians
The course will be a four-year degree program. The candidates would be offered courses in librarianship, education and one teaching subject in either the humanities, social sciences, or sciences. The courses offered are listed as follows:

Librarianship Courses (Compulsory)
Society development and libraries
Learning resources in education
Reference sources and user services
Cataloguing and classification
Collection development
Administration of school libraries
Computers in libraries and education
Library practice
Library survey

Librarianship Courses (Required)
Technical routine processes
Literature and library services to children and young adults
Bibliographies
Media technology
Indexing and abstracting
Interlibrary loan and cooperation

Librarianship Courses (Elective)
The handicapped and library services

Education Courses (Compulsory)
Psychology of learning
General principles of curriculum and instruction

Sociology of education

Education Courses (Required)
Introduction to the history and policy of education
Sociological and philosophical foundations of education
Psychological foundations of education
Introduction to special education
History and policy of education in Nigeria

Teaching Subject

The candidate would be offered at least one teaching subject in either the humanities, social sciences, or sciences in other departments to study for four years.

The Master of Library Science for School Librarians

The candidates for the master's program will be offered courses in librarianship and education only. The subjects studied for the bachelor's degree would be sufficient for required subject background. The candidates would be offered more courses in library science to give them the professional competence.

Librarianship Courses (Compulsory)
Collection development
Cataloguing and classification
Automation in libraries, archives and information centers
Administration of school library media center
Reference sources and user services
Working with children and young adults
Independent study (project)
Practical work in libraries

Librarianship Courses (Required)
History of archives, libraries and information systems
Subject information sources
Indexing and abstracting
Audio visual resources

Education Courses (Compulsory)
Philosophy of education
Psychology of learning
Principles of curriculum design

Education Courses (Required)
Research methods in education

The admission of students to these programs would give preference to candidates with teaching qualifications. In the selection of the courses we have been guided by the reports of the following bodies: United Kingdom's Library and Information Services Council's Working Party on School Library Services (1984), IFLA (1985), and Canadian School Library Association (1985 & 1989). The reports indicate the areas of competence on which training is to be given as education, librarianship, and management. For the training program being proposed for Nigeria, management will be part of the librarianship courses. Provision is made for a teaching subject to be offered in other departments. The school librarian needs the teaching subject for equal academic status with other teachers. The knowledge of a teaching subject would help them in collection development and reference services to users.

Effort is now being made to organize a national conference on the training programs later this year. Participants at the conference would include: Library educators, librarians, officials of the federal and state ministries of education, the National Librarian, Nigerian Library Association, officials of the teaching service commissions, national university commission, representatives of the Nigeria Union of Teachers, Conference of Principals of secondary schools and headmasters of primary schools, school librarians, and other interested bodies.

The conference would examine and deliberate on the course content of the training programs to determine their relevance and adequacy and to make recommendations to the appropriate organ of government for their adoption for training school librarians for the Nigerian school system. It is our hope that the Nigerian School Library Association would receive the needed support from the related sectors in education to make the proposal a reality.

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